

Cell phones are only way for Long Islanders without power to communicate

Hauppauge, NY— Today, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) called on FEMA to provide “Cell-on-Wheels” (“COWs”) trucks as well as “cell on light trucks” (“COLTs”) to provide additional cell service to Long Islanders as they continue to face widespread power outages. Most home phones on Long Island are not working, either due to power outages or landlines that were downed along with power lines. Cell phones are the sole means of communication for many households on Long Island.

The full text of the letter is below:

October 31, 2012

Janet Napolitano
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW, Mail Stop 0501
Washington, DC 2052

CC: William Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW, Room 714
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Secretary Napolitano and Administrator Fugate,

The Long Island Power Authority has estimated that power may not be restored for longer than

10 days to most of our community. Phone and cable companies are reliant on power companies for restoration of landline phone service. This means that cell phones will be people's only means of communication in the days, and possibly weeks, to come. My constituents not only need to be able to contact their loved ones, but cell service will be critical for them to be able to contact the emergency and disaster responders that are helping recovery efforts in the region. Unfortunately, most of the cell service North Shore of Long Island was wiped out.

Therefore, as the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) works to restore power to more than 800,000 people on Long Island, I request that FEMA work with wireless carriers to deploy additional "Cell on Wheels" or "COW" trucks as well as their "cell on light trucks" or COLTs to Long Island.

COWs and COLTs have been used before to provide expanded cellular network coverage and capacity at major sporting events, political conventions, and disasters such as what is now occurring on Long Island. FEMA deployed COWs after September 11th and Hurricane Katrina, and I believe Hurricane Sandy should be no different.

I implore you to move as swiftly as possible to deploy the COWs and COLTs in order to help my constituents as well as local, state and federal disaster efforts on Long Island. I look forward to your prompt response regarding this matter.

Sincerely,
Steve Israel
Member of Congress
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